

# **MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET**

**“The Prophet of the Desert”**

**By**

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**Abridged By: Safdar Hasan Siddiqi**

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Muhammad in his past forties is to be seen often deep in thought. He has withdrawn more and more into solitude. There has gradually awakened in him the realization that the religions hitherto existing, the social systems set up and the civilizations of the day have outlived their utility. The purpose of his life begins gradually to unfold itself.

The faith finally revealed to Muhammad by God is clearly a faith that the meanest intelligence can comprehend. It is manifestly common ground upon which divergent viewpoints can assemble. Muhammad stands for all that is clean and honest in life. Muhammad sought out for Islam the most intelligent, the most brave, and the most earnest. He recruited from the best men of character, men of brains and men with courage.

The Prophet gives himself no special status, he creates no priesthood, he does not interpose between God and man, and recognizes no monopoly of spiritual knowledge. For Muhammad the Prophet is after all Muhammad a man. For himself he claims the status of an ordinary man. Every man is made his own priest before God, as he is no better and no worse than others of his kind. God and His creatures are put into direct communication with one another. No sacrifice, no ritual, no temple, no altar is needed to bring the willing heart to the bosom of its comforter. Anywhere upon the God's earth or under his blue sky, such is the temple that Muhammad set up for Islam.

Muhammad is a man free from vanity and personal aggrandizement, in all a man neither amenable to fear nor corrupted by ambition. He also tells his people of the urgent need,

in which they stand, of a leader of outstanding merits to extricate them from their political and social stagnation.

The God of Muhammad is the *Rab-ul-Aalameen* – the Creator, Nourisher, Sustainer of all the worlds and of all mankind, believers and unbelievers. Similarly the society set up by Islam is open to all persons, irrespective of distinction of colour, race or worldly goods. It is a brotherhood *par excellence*.

In Islam, a man is intended to go through life very much as God made him. He has been given eyes to see, a palate for taste, and senses of touch, smell and hearing. He has been endowed with feelings and emotions. He is in possession of reason, instinct and passion. However, in every thing, in every inch of the universe, there are processes at work that are beyond human control.

The Prophet does not undertake to intercede for anyone; he makes God accessible to the multitude without restriction of time and place. The catalogue of sin in Islam is also reduced to a bare minimum. A Muslim, excepting within the narrow ambit of the forbidden, translates joy in its fullness. Islam is very much the original and natural religion (faith) of man.

Muhammad, in a letter written to Najashi Ashama, Emperor of Abyssinia, said: " I bear testimony that Jesus, the son of Mary is the spirit of God and His word. He is the son of the immaculate Virgin Mary. God created Jesus of His Spirit, animating him as he animated Adam. As for me, I am a mere messenger of God; my mission is to call you to follow me, to invite you to accept the cult of the one God, a God Who has no equal and Who commands all the powers of Earth and Heaven"

Islam in reality is a faith of peace for humanity at large. In order to be a good Muslim, it is not necessary to reject the truth or the veracity of other religions revealed to the world before the Qur'an. The Qur'an does not presume to set new ideas, not already known to mankind. Its mission is to preach the truth of the oneness of God and the unity of His creation, in its simple naked beauty. Islam is a faith easy of comprehension. The child or the man of wisdom may equally delight in its simplicity. It is not burdened with dogma contrary to logic or reason. There is no need for head

and heart to tread different paths. A Muslim can avow his faith without insulting his intelligence.

The main principles of Islam are summarized in a verse of the sura *Al-Baqrah*, five principle being indicated – three of belief and two of practice. A Muslim is required to believe in the one God, in the truth as revealed in the Qur'an and the scriptures that have preceded it. In the practical issues, a Muslim is enjoined to prayer and to charity in its widest sense. To be a good Muslim, the practical is as important as the theoretical, mere belief being insufficient. Over and over again the Qur'an lays emphasis upon those who believe *and* do good. Parochialism or any notion of the favoured nation or the chosen people has no place in the teachings of Islam. The doctrine of common humanity is the corollary upon the doctrine of the one God.

The salvation and the mercy of God are not confined to the members of any creed. There is no honour by birth. There is but one criterion of greatness open to all alike: "Surely the noblest among you in the eyes of God is one who is most mindful of his duty." Islam establishes a brotherhood among all Muslims. The rule of brotherhood among Muslims was enjoined by the Prophet when he said: "No one among you is a believer in God, unless he loves his brother as he loves himself." Islam is a faith of peace and toleration. The dominant feature of Islam, as its very name implies, is the making of peace. A Muslim is one who has made his peace with God and man. Peace with God implies the complete submission to the laws of creation. Peace with mankind implies the doing of good to one's fellow creatures.

Islam is a code of practical ethics and a guide to daily life. Duty to God has a place beside duty to man, oneself, one's fellow creatures and the other sex. The reward of Islam is based on conduct not upon belief. Islam eradicates various injustices of a social nature. In Islam woman obtains the right to property and inheritance. Her relationship in matrimony is placed upon an equitable basis. She is protected against whim and injustice; in certain circumstances she may claim separation and divorce. Islam also introduces a system of poor relief, which is both voluntary, as well as a duty. Islam takes account of human nature; that in order to be a good man, it is not necessary to abjure the fineries of life, to starve, to deform the body to be loyal to a union in which love

has ceased to exist, or to resist normal appetites in food and flesh. You are not required to obey unjust laws and suffer the infamy of tyrants.

Islam is the first faith of the world to place the acquisition and cultivation of knowledge before the worship of God. In Islam faith and science are co-related. In the eyes of the Prophet to explore the realms of nature and the hidden corners of the universe, is not merely a service in the cause of humanity, it is a service in the glorification of God.. He says: "He who leaves home in the search of knowledge, walks in the path of God." And again, "It is incumbent on every one, male or female, to acquire knowledge." "The ink of the scholar is more holy than the blood of the martyr. "Acquire knowledge, it will enable you to distinguish right and wrong, it will light the way to heaven, it will be your society in solitude, your companion in loneliness, your guide to happiness, the sustainer of your misery, the ornament among your friends, and the armour against your enemies."

Muhammad goes among the people as an ordinary man, consoling the afflicted, lending a hand wherever needed, giving his advice where sought. His food and living is of the plainest. He offers and receives hospitality. He enjoys a joke and laughs heartily. He plays with children and runs races with his friends. He enjoys the beauty of flowers and the fragrance of perfume. Though his life is simple, he has not perverted his nature to the abnegation of the good things of life; he gives love for love, he is a warm-hearted friend, a tender husband, and a fair master. He dearly loves little children. He has an open mind; he likes debates; he admires good qualities in others. He is ready to admit a fault or an error; he is no ashamed of a just rebuke, whether by God or by a man; His most estimable quality is that in his own estimation he is no more than a mere man.

In Muhammad's period the age of barbarism, blood feuds, pagan manners and corrupt beliefs, have given place to an era of enlightenment, knowledge, understanding and humanity.

Finally, the Prophet directed that the *suras* of the Qur'an should be arranged. These measures assured that, for all time, the text of the Quran would be maintained in its original purity. As a matter of

fact from the earliest years of the revelations, the prophet had taken precautions that the precious texts should be reduced to writings. His practice had been to dictate the passages, as soon as revealed. He had given clear instructions that they are not to put into writing any matter, as emanating from him, except the Qur'an, so that there may be no confusion between the divine text and his personal observations, made on several occasions. And thus was set up the basis of the Islamic Law, the *Shariah*, which has wider application than most secular law, as it is intended to regulate all aspects of life – duty to God, duty one's neighbour, and to oneself. The *Shariah* is, therefore, in substance a code of duties, ethical, religious and legal.

The development of the Islamic law begins with the Prophet sitting as a judge in Madina. He is guided in the first instance by the Qur'an, and where the latter is silent, then upon his own judgment. His deputies, who are called upon to exercise the judicial or administrative functions delegated to them, have first to consult the Qur'an, then to apply any known decision of the Prophet in a similar case; if they are unable to find any precedent or direction, then it is permissible to apply their own reason and to decide the question justly to the best of their ability. This latter privilege has been expressly recognized by the Prophet. The law of Islam recognizes no exceptions; it is binding upon all Muslims, the meanest and the most exalted alike.

On the completion of his last pilgrimage in Mecca, the Prophet said among other things: "Remember that your lives and property are sacred and inviolable amongst one another for all time". "Your Lord has ordained that every man shall have his share of inheritance, and a will or testament prejudicial to his heirs is unlawful." "O people! You have rights over your wives, as they have rights over you.... If your wives refrain from impropriety and are faithful to you, clothe and feed them suitably. They are a trust from God in your hands." "Listen O people! Fix this in your hearts that every Muslim is the brother of every other Muslim. You are all equal, enjoying equal rights and subject to the same obligations. You are members of a common brotherhood. It is accordingly forbidden to you to take from your brother, save that which he gives you of his own free will."

The Prophet's genius of the Prophet was contrived to surmount obstacles. For the first time in history, he establishes a practical order of brotherhood, replacing ancient

feuds, by sacred bonds of union. He established thereby, not merely, a temporal empire but also a more important empire in the hearts of his people. Profound in his knowledge of men, he sought out and attracted to his creed the bravest and the most brilliant of his enemies. It is thus that, in so short a time, Islam has been transformed from a petty state in Medina into a mighty empire.

Abridged by: Safdar Hasan Siddiqi on 16<sup>th</sup> July, 2005.